




Speech By
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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (4.13 pm): I rise to speak to the appropriation bills and respond on behalf of the people of South Brisbane and outline the Greens' vision for what this budget could achieve. This year everyday people across Queensland have made sacrifices. Many of us have been unable to see loved ones, have missed out on weddings, holidays and funerals, but we have pulled back together to tackle this health crisis and keep everyone safe. Thanks must go to our incredible frontline health workers and a strong commitment to the public health advice given by the Chief Health Officer and the government. It is thanks to this and the sacrifices and hard work of everyday people all across Queensland that we are able to enjoy our current freedom and safety.

Queenslanders have worked hard, but now we are being told to work even harder with a budget that will force everyday Queenslanders to pick up the slack with limited investment in housing, in schools, in clean energy and in secure meaningful jobs. Right now in Queensland our unemployment rate is at 7.7 per cent. It is up as high as 11.9 per cent in some parts of regional Queensland. Youth unemployment is even higher. In my electorate of South Brisbane every week hundreds of people line up for food packets and hundreds of international students rely on food relief.

This budget relies on unacceptable sacrifices for too many Queenslanders while massive mining corporations and the banks get off scot-free. While coal and gas export prices have dropped, it is simply disingenuous for massive multinational mining companies to cry poor. BHP and Anglo American, with significant interests in coal and gas in Queensland, are both enjoying their biggest share price since at least 2011. Chris Wallin who owns QCoal, a company that part owns five coal mines in the Bowen Basin, is still on the Forbes Rich List with a net worth of \$1.75 billion.

It is almost farcical to suggest that these mining billionaires cannot afford to pay a little bit more in mining royalties, particularly when everyday Queenslanders are being asked to sacrifice so much. In a resource rich, wealthy state like ours there is no excuse for such a dangerously conservative budget at this critical time. It is full of underspend. It is going to leave Queenslanders in the lurch for years to come. What Queenslanders need now is bold government investment in tens of thousands of good secure jobs. While parts of this budget deliver jobs here and there, it does not go nearly far enough to tackle the scale of the crisis we are facing.

By way of comparison, over the next four years the Victorian government will invest \$78.4 billion in infrastructure. The New South Wales government will invest \$107 billion. So why here in Queensland is the government only planning to spend \$56 billion on infrastructure over the next four years? Even when one adjusts for population, the Queensland government is spending billions of dollars less every year than our southern counterparts. That is billions of dollars that could have gone into building more crucial public infrastructure like schools, hospitals and public homes.

Perhaps one of the starkest contrasts is the government's funding for social housing. The Victorian government has announced it will spend \$5.3 billion to build more than 12,000 social dwellings over the next four years. In stark contrast, the Queensland government has made it clear it only intends to build 1,800 social homes over the next four years. As of June 2019 there were 39,000 Queenslanders on the social housing waiting list, a list that is growing by 7,000 people every year. This budget relies on thousands of Queensland families having to wait years for safe and secure roofs over their heads.

As the Victorian government has rightly pointed out, their mass build of social housing will create 43,000 good secure jobs with tradies and firms large and small knowing they have a secure and massive pipeline of work over the next critical years. This is what Queenslanders are missing out on. This is what Queenslanders are being asked to sacrifice with this budget.

For South Brisbane I welcome a number of pre-election commitments that have been followed through: funding for cycling and active transport infrastructure; funding for the long-called-for Kangaroo Point riverwalk; additional capacity for Buranda State School; and crucial works for Dutton Park State School. However, funding allocated for the Montague Road study, a road that has been notoriously dangerous and congested for years as a result of poor planning, will not come online until 2022 at the earliest. Our community needs urgent investment in public transport, a new ferry terminal and active transport infrastructure. It is not enough to defer blame to the Brisbane City Council. The state government has to bear responsibility for the outcomes of a planning act that has created and allowed property developers to overrun our communities.

East Brisbane State School has also missed out in this current budget, despite reaching capacity and despite the ongoing advocacy of the P&C and the school community. If education is a priority for this government, why are prep students expected to start their schooling in demountable classrooms? I have said it before and I will say it again: Queensland is a wealthy state, so you would think our state schools would be some of the best funded in the country. Instead, Queensland state schools are the most underfunded state schools in the country and our parents, teachers and children pay the costs. The Queensland government has committed only 69 per cent of the 80 per cent schooling resource standard. I compare that to Tasmania and Western Australia, which have committed over 75 per cent or, even better, the ACT, which has committed the full 80 per cent. This budget does nothing to address that shortfall.

In the lead-up to the election one of the big promises we heard from Labor was about 6,000 new teachers and 1,000 new teacher aides over the next four years, which was a very welcome announcement. However, those positions appear to be funded from the existing education department budget. There is no new money and the numbers include replacing thousands of retiring and resigning teachers. The Greens believe that we should be fully funding our state schools, cutting class sizes, abolishing class school fees for state schools, and giving every child a free breakfast and lunch so that no child has to learn on an empty stomach. However, this budget relies on an unacceptable level of sacrifice by teachers, parents and children across the state.

Another big promise we heard from Labor in the lead-up to the election was for 5,800 new nurses, 1,500 doctors and 1,700 allied health professionals by 2024. Again, that was a welcome commitment because anyone who has been to an emergency department in a public hospital or has waited in an overcrowded outpatient clinic knows that our public hospitals desperately need more resources and frontline staff. However, again when we look at the details of the budget there is no new funding. That means that Queensland Health and our hospitals will need to cut \$270 million from their other works every single year. They will need to find an extra \$1 billion over the next four years. Our frontline workers know what 'efficiency measures' is code for. It is code for do more with less and give up unpaid hours so that staff do not have to go home worrying about whether their patients will be well cared for. The budget relies on an unacceptable level of sacrifice by our frontline health workers and Queenslanders seeking health care.

The community is being asked to carry the cost of a lack of investment in housing and mental health for new prisons, detention centres and police. In particular, the \$86 million investment in youth detention beds shows what little ambition this government has for our young people. I join with the member for Maiwar in calling for a moratorium on any new youth and adult prisons, and for the government to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14. The Queensland Police Service could also find that there are savings to be made by diverting those police who are currently deployed to maintain the indefinite detention of refugees at Kangaroo Point.

The community is being asked to bear the cost of underinvestment in housing with an increasing number of children in out-of-home care. In Queensland the rate of children in out-of-home care has increased from 2018-19, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. I join the Home Stretch campaign in calling on the government to urgently extend funding for young people in out-of-home care until at least the age of 21.

The community will also continue to pay the cost of Queensland's lack of action on climate change. We welcome the \$500 million from the Renewable Energy Fund and grid upgrades for renewable energy zones, but the reality is that that is a drop in the ocean when we consider the scale of the challenge we are facing and the opportunities that Queensland has to create thousands of secure jobs. The Greens' proposal to invest \$20 billion in building publicly-owned renewable energy assets across Queensland would create thousands of jobs and cut electricity prices, ensuring that every Queenslanders shares the benefits of those public assets. We could be manufacturing wind turbines, solar panels and batteries here in Queensland and taking full advantage of Queensland's sunshine, open space and wind. While mining corporations enjoy a royalties freeze and mining executives walk away with millions of dollars in their pockets, for years to come everyday Queenslanders will continue to pay for the cost of the government's inaction on climate change.

For the Treasurer to be crowing, just a few days ago, that this budget was applauded by the Queensland Resources Council tells us everything we need to know. This is a budget written to ensure that big multinational mining companies maintain their extraordinary wealth while Queenslanders go homeless. It is a budget to maintain the royalties at paltry levels while people in South Brisbane line up for food parcels. It is a budget that lets government donors and lobbyists line their pockets while kids as young as 10 are chucked in watch houses.

This budget is a tremendous missed opportunity. We should be taking advantage of record low interest rates. We should be taking advantage of the immense mining wealth here in Queensland by raising mining royalties, by lifting the cap on infrastructure charges and by making the big banks pay their fair share with a modest bank levy, and investing that in the things that everyday Queenslanders crucially need. With this budget the government had a choice to make, that is, who would pay for the economic recovery here in Queensland: big corporations or everyday Queenslanders? This budget makes it clear that the Queensland Labor government has chosen the side of big corporations.